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Consultation Document

Closure of Llanrumney High School

Date of issue: **27 February 2013**

Action required: Responses by **27 March 2013**

Closure of Llanrumney High School

- Overview** This consultation is about whether the Minister for Education and Skills should direct Cardiff Local Authority to close Llanrumney High School with effect from the end of August 2013.
- How to respond** Responses to this consultation should be e-mailed/posted to the address below to arrive by **27 March 2013** at the latest.
- Further information and related documents** Large print, Braille and alternate language versions of this document are available on request.
The consultation documents can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.wales.gov.uk/consultations
- Contact details** For further information:
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Data protection

How the views and information you give us will be used

Any response you send us will be seen in full by Welsh Government staff dealing with the issues which this consultation is about. It may also be seen by other Welsh Government staff to help them plan future consultations.

The Welsh Government intends to publish a summary of the responses to this document. We may also publish responses in full. Normally, the name and address (or part of the address) of the person or organisation who sent the response are published with the response. This helps to show that the consultation was carried out properly. If you do not want your name or address published, please tell us this in writing when you send your response. We will then blank them out.

Names or addresses we blank out might still get published later, though we do not think this would happen very often. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 allow the public to ask to see information held by many public bodies, including the Welsh Government. This includes information which has not been published. However, the law also allows us to withhold information in some circumstances. If anyone asks to see information we have withheld, we will have to decide whether to release it or not. If someone has asked for their name and address not to be published, that is an important fact we would take into account. However, there might sometimes be important reasons why we would have to reveal someone's name and address, even though they have asked for them not to be published. We would get in touch with the person and ask their views before we finally decided to reveal the information.

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Background to the proposal

This consultation is about the Minister for Education and Skills' proposal to direct Cardiff County Council ("the authority") to close Llanrumney High School with effect from the end of August 2013.

The effect of the proposal will mean that, from September 2013, all of Llanrumney's pupils would attend Rumney High School or another school that parents may prefer and where there is a place available in relevant year groups.

Section 19 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 ("the 1998 Act") enables the Welsh Ministers to direct a local authority to close a school which is deemed by Estyn to require Special Measures. Estyn is the body responsible for inspecting schools in Wales. Special Measures is defined as :

"Special measures are required to be taken in relation to a school if the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school."

Both Local Authorities and the Welsh Ministers have powers to intervene where a school is causing concern.

Llanrumney High School was placed in Special Measures following an inspection by Estyn in October 2012. The Estyn inspection report states that:

Current performance is unsatisfactory because:

- performance in nearly all indicators at key stage 4 does not compare well with that of similar schools;
- a majority of pupils do not make enough progress in their reading and writing skills, and subject knowledge;
- there are important shortcomings in the majority of lessons;
- the poor behaviour of pupils in a minority of lessons disrupts learning;
- a minority of teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour well enough;
- the quality of assessment of pupils' work varies too much and often does not give pupils a good enough understanding of how to improve;
- there are shortcomings in the school's safeguarding procedures;
- a minority of pupils report that bullying is common and not always dealt with effectively; and,
- the school does not meet requirements for the daily act of collective worship.

Prospects for improvement are unsatisfactory because:

- the school's self-evaluation activities do not provide a sufficiently accurate picture of the school's performance;
- improvement planning has not been effective in bringing about improvements in important areas such as standards in key stage 4, attendance and behaviour;
- strategies to manage behaviour and deal with bullying have not been effective enough;
- since the time of the last inspection, leaders have not challenged underperformance robustly enough;
- the school has not made enough progress in addressing most of recommendations from the last inspection report;
- the effectiveness of middle leaders in bringing about improvements is too variable;
- the governing body does not challenge the school to improve effectively enough; and,
- the school has a budget deficit of around three quarters of a million pounds.

The full Estyn report can be viewed at:

<http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/provider/6814052/>

Welsh Government guidance indicates that local authorities should consider closing schools that are in special measures if there are places available at nearby better performing schools.

The local authority's proposal

The closure of Llanrumney High School is already being proposed by the authority. The authority's proposal is to close Llanrumney and Rumney High Schools from August 2014 and establish a replacement 11-16 High school from September 2014. For academic year 2013-14, the proposal is that Llanrumney and Rumney schools will both be located on the Rumney site. The authority published a statutory notice for this proposal on 18 January 2013 and, by the end of the objection period, it had received no objections. The authority is under an obligation to determine whether or not to proceed with its proposals by 18 May 2013.

The authority has established an Education Improvement Partnership in order to help both schools raise standards and work together.

The authority intends to appoint a temporary governing body and to have a head teacher in place in September 2013 if their proposal proceeds.

The schools would continue to have their own head teachers and governing bodies until such time as the 2 schools cease to exist. Under these proposals this would occur in September 2014.

The Minister's proposal

As outlined, the Minister is consulting on a proposal which would see Llanrumney High School closed at the end of August 2013 rather than August 2014, as proposed by the

authority. In September 2013 all pupils of Llanrumney would be able to attend Rumney High School or another school with available places.

Why is the Minister considering taking a different approach?

Llanrumney High School has been placed in Special Measure by Estyn. The school also has significant numbers of surplus places and a significant budget deficit. The Welsh Government believes that although the authority intends to close Llanrumney High School as part of its proposal to close both Llanrumney and Rumney High schools, it would be better to close Llanrumney sooner, and from 1 September 2013, transfer the pupils to Rumney High School.

The Minister has also considered the following relevant matters:

School	Capacity	NOR* Jan 2012	Surplus capacity
Llanrumney	1432	497	935
Rumney	1407	659	748
Total		1156	

(*NOR = number on roll)

Pupil projections for the school are that for Llanrumney the total roll is set to fall further to approximately 340 in September 2015, seeing the surplus rise to c. 1092 places (76% surplus). For Rumney High School the latest pupil projections show the total roll set to fall further to 616 in September 2015, seeing the surplus rise to c 791 places (56% surplus).

It is clear that there is capacity at Rumney High to accommodate all pupils currently and in the foreseeable future. The local authority has advised the Minister that the buildings of Rumney High School, although requiring investment, are more suitable for the delivery of the curriculum than those at Llanrumney High School in the short term.

Evidence from Estyn Inspections

Inspections carried out up until 2010 were judged by asking seven key questions and awarding grades based on a five point scale as follows:

Grade 1	Good with outstanding features
Grade 2	Good features and no important shortcomings
Grade 3	Good features outweigh shortcomings
Grade 4	Some good features, but shortcomings in important areas
Grade 5	Many important shortcomings

The inspection team in October 2008 (report published December 2008) judged the work of Rumney High School to be as follows:

	Rumney High School
How well do learners achieve	3
How effective are teaching, training and assessment	2
How well do the learning experiences meet the needs and interests of learners and the wider community	3
How well are learners cared for guided and supported	1
How effective are leadership and strategic management	3
How well do leaders and managers evaluate and improve quality and standards	2
How efficient are leaders and manager in using resources	2

As a result of changes made in 2011 by Estyn to the inspection criteria Llanrumney high School was evaluated by asking three key questions and awarding judgement based on a four points scale as follows:

Judgement	What the judgement means
Excellent	Many strengths, including significant examples of sector-leading practice
Good	Many strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement
Adequate	Strengths outweigh areas for improvement.
Unsatisfactory	Important areas for improvement outweigh strengths.

Llanrumney High School was inspected in October 2012. The schools' performance was judged as follows:

Overall Summary Judgements	
The school's current performance	Unsatisfactory
The school's prospects for improvement	Unsatisfactory
Key Questions	
How good are the outcomes?	Unsatisfactory
How good is provision?	Unsatisfactory
How good are leadership and management?	Unsatisfactory

Llanrumney High School is placed in band 5 of the Welsh Government's school banding rates and Rumney High School is placed in band 4.

In addition, Llanrumney has a significant budget deficit of approximately £750,000

Having taken account of the authority's proposals and the above relevant matters, the Minister has concluded that the earlier closure of Llanrumney is justified.

The main reasons why the Minister believes that this accelerated action is necessary are:

- Pupils would no longer be in a school in special measures;

- Savings on staff costs would be likely to be achievable sooner because only one headteacher and senior staff team would be needed, instead of the current 2 headteachers and the head in waiting for the new school;
- It would be necessary for the authority and the Education Improvement Partnership to work with only one governing body instead of 2, which could help secure better communications and more rapid improvement in outcomes for pupils;
- Pupils would immediately be part of a single school rather than share a school site with another school; and,
- There would be a much shorter period of transition, and a shorter period of uncertainty for staff, pupils and parents. This would mean that efforts could focus on driving up standards at the larger school from 1 September 2013.

What might be the disadvantages of the Minister's alternative approach?

- Pupils and parents may think that the time period prior to the school closing is too short and it does not give them enough time to think about whether they want to transfer to Rumney or to another school that might have places. The Minister believes, however that it is better for uncertainty to be resolved quickly and that pupils are able to attend a school not in special measures as soon as possible
- Staff at Llanrumney High School may find that their jobs are at risk. The Minister regrets any uncertainty of this nature, but believes that the best teachers will find other employment.
- The shortening of the timeframe for the closure of Llanrumney might present logistical and operational difficulties to the authority. However it is reasonable to recognise that the authority's plans are well advanced and that the schools have been earmarked for closure for a significant period, with the first proposal to close both schools being published in 2009. This will mitigate this truncated period. Furthermore, the fact that all pupils and staff are intended to be located on the Rumney School site from September 2013 may in fact mean that there is no noticeable effect from a shorter notice period, or none that the authority cannot itself mitigate by managing HR processes etc effectively during the academic year. As part of this consultation process, the authority's view is being sought on that.
- Managing the influx of Llanrumney's pupils and continuing to drive forward improvements will present a challenge to the leadership team at Rumney High School and to the authority. As part of this consultation process, the informed view of Estyn, the authority and others is being sought on this.

How to take part in the consultation process

The consultation will run from 27 February until 27 March 2013.

Copies of the consultation document will be made available to the public via the Welsh Government's web-site. Parent, guardians, children, staff and governors of the affected schools will be alerted to the consultation and invited to respond.

Following consultation the Welsh Minister will consider the views expressed and then decide whether to proceed with the proposal.